

מאי ה' טבת

The following thoughts presented here are in response to numerous requests for "osiyos" on how to explain Hei Teves to ourselves, our families and kehilos.

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Brief history

The story is well known. Someone stole Seforim from the library that was left by the previous Rebbe as well as his yechidus room, claiming he is a partial yoresh, and sold the books.

Upon learning of it and after trying to quietly dissuade him from selling the books - in an unprecedented passionate style the Rebbe spoke about it in public, using unusual expressions regarding the meaning and תוכן הענין of what was happening.

After attempting, unsuccessfully, to bring the matter to a Din Torah, *Agudas Chasidei Chabad* - the legal entity owning the books - brought the matter to court for a restraining order and ruling about the ownership of the library.

During the days of the *mishpat* the Rebbe went to the Ohel of the Frierdiker Rebbe every weekday (until Chassidim accepted upon themselves various *Ruchniyusdike inyonim*, after which the Rebbe eased his daily visits a bit).

The court placed a restraining order and eventually ruled that the Seforim belong and should be returned to *Agudas Chasidei Chabad*.

Upon the court's ruling on Hei Teves 5747, Chassidim celebrated for seven days straight in expression of *hiskashrus* and outburst of *simcha*, literally שבעת ימי המשתה.

On his part, on Hei Teves after mincha the Rebbe spoke a Sicha, in a rather restrained fashion, calling upon Chassidim to respond to the whole saga with increasing the learning of *Chassidus* and *Hafotzas Hamayanos*.

(Perhaps because there was a great deal of pain; perhaps because of the lesson derived from the Luchos Horishonus Sh'nitnu B'raash, etc.)

The next day, on Vov Teves, the Rebbe said that on the following day he will be going to the Ohel of the Frierdiker Rebbe and encouraged people to send their requests to be brought to the Ohel for a blessing. On the following day of Zayin Teves when the Rebbe went to the Ohel, thousands upon thousands of *Pidyonos* were faxed, telephoned etc. into the office and neighboring people (as the office telephone was unable to handle the volume of incoming calls), who brought their *Pidyonos* to the Rebbe. (Indeed many *mofsim* happened regarding the various requests of those days.)

On Monday, Beis Kislev 5748 when the *Seforim* actually arrived, the Rebbe was at the Ohel. From there he asked that some Seforim be brought there. He then chose the Kabblah Sefer *Derech Emunah* and asked/urged that it should be printed and ready to be learned that Shabbos.

On the first anniversary of Hei Teves, 5748, the Rebbe referred to the victory as the Didan Notzach of the Seforim, and instructed to buy Seforim, since this is the day of the Seforim. Then in subsequent years, the Rebbe often spoke about the significance of the day as expressing the idea of the chayim nitzchiim of the Rebbe/Rabbeim.

There are a great many details that took place in the course of the six years, from the discovery of theft in 5745 until *Elul* 5750, when all the details of the case came to a close. When informed about the closure the Rebbe asked “איז דאס איז דאס?” when told that yes, he said “איצטער וועט מען קענען זאגן תורה”

Each of these episodes deserves to be told and highlighted as they are part of the great puzzle of the saga. This article is an attempt to touch upon the core of the issue and to explain some of the extreme expressions/*leshonos* used by the Rebbe in relation to the episode.

It will also attempt to address the obvious question: how does it relate to us today - once the case was won and the Seforim returned?

Expressions regarding the case

At the very outset of making the public aware of what was happening, the Rebbe said that taking the Seforim out of their place and selling them is “א צווייטע לוי'ה, a second funeral of the frierdiker Rebbe”, when in fact he is alive; even more alive and getting stronger and more active over the course of time.

This, the Rebbe said was a *מלחמה* against ALL the רביים, from the alter Rebbe on.

This needs to be explained: How is stealing some books for the purpose of selling them in exchange of money considered a second *levaye* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, or a fight against the Rebbeim? Speaking to aguch, the Rebbe said that this is *א מלחמה אויפ'ן ביינקעל*, i.e. the Nesius of Chabad. How so? Did the thief claim or desire to be crowned as Rebbe?! And who cares what he thinks, as the expression from *Tanach*: אַחֲרֵי מִי יֵצֵא מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל... אַחֲרֵי פֶרַעַשׁ אֶחָד.

In order to minimize *עגמת נפש* and save the *פרסומת השם* etc. some Chassidim suggested to pay off the culprit in exchange of the return of the Seforim. The Rebbe absolutely rejected the notion of paying ransom money, calling it *עבודה זרה*. What is the meaning of this? (In fact the Rebbe himself privately suggested that if he needs money for *parnasah* he can be helped, but not ח"ו in exchange for the return of the Seforim, the act of which would be considered ע"ז).

As mentioned, as intense and extreme the expressions used by the Rebbe at the outset, (as well as later on) the Rebbe explained the significance of the issue being associated with the Rebbe's,

i.e. the Friediker Rebbe's life - once the case was won, it seemed that the Rebbe toned down the ecstasy and declared it "Didan Notzach and the Yom Tov of the Seforim".

How does that coincide with all the aforementioned burning issues, for which it seemed that all of Lubavitch was at stake?

Finally, in the Rebbe's first *Sicha* of Hei Teves 5747, he mentioned the "מצב המבהיל וספיקות" "שנמצאו בתקופה האחרונה". Which מצב מבהיל and ספיקות is the Rebbe referring to?

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The question reminds us of the Gemara's famous question introducing the *Sugya* of Chanuka "מאי חנוכה"?

The question that begs itself is, why is there a question in the first place? Didn't the sages who practiced Chanuka know what Chanukah was? Is there a question מאי פסח, מאי שבועות, and מאי סוכות?

B'Hemshech to Rashi's famous answer regarding Chanukah that the Gemara's question is: what is the **main** reason for the celebration of חנוכה; is it the victory of the war, or the miracle of the oil. It could be said that the **very question** is at the core of Chanukah; the question points out what Chanukah is all about, i.e. that the fact that there is a question "what is Chanukah?" indicates that Chanukah is very unique and thus needs an explanation.

There is the famous question: "Why couldn't the Jews and Greeks get along?" both peoples are people of enlightened wisdom; the Jews, at least in the beginning, were not prevented from learning Torah and doing Mitzvos; they were only asked to study it as an academic pursuit without emphasizing that it is Hashem's Torah and that Mitzvos should be performed culturally, not on account of a command from Hashem.

So what? For that you go to war? and even risking the possibility of ו'נ wiping out the few remaining loyal Jews?!

(In today's terms: imagine a few individuals standing with handguns against an onslaught of a battalion of tanks.)

Indeed, the majority of the Jewish people at the time fell for it. Only the Maccabees led by Matisyahu, were ממוסר נפש for this principle.

Chassidus explains that the fight was about the Neshomo of Yiddishkeit, the sensitivity of being connected to Hashem, without which there is no Yiddishkeit, there is no Torah, there is no Mitzvos, there is no Jewish people. The purity of the essence of G-d, the purity of the Jewish people and the purity of Torah and Mitzvos is what was at stake.

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It is about the Rebbe, it is about the Neshama of Chassidus, and ultimately about the Neshama of יהדות. And whereas seemingly "life was good" and it went on without a hitch, there came

the case of the Seforim, which threw a dart and raised ספקות mentioned in the Sicha of Hei Teves.

Chassidus explains and every Chosid knows and believes that the Rebbe is a נשמה כללית, the head that is the center which gives life to the collective body of the Jewish people. Through him Hashem is *mashpia kochos ruchniim of emunah, yiras Hashem and chayus* in Torah and Mitzvos, and physical and material life and sustenance as well.

This is not just when one comes to the Rebbe in times of need, but on an ongoing basis. Like a head to the body, the head takes care of the body not just when it aches, rather it is the center of life and energy of the entire body.

It is well understood that the brain - being the nerve center and source of life of the person - is of an extreme sensitive make; it is also well understood that the body must remain connected to the head for it to remain alive and well.

In the נמשל, a Rebbe is a נשמה of higher order, *Yechida*, whose entire being is ביטול to אלוקות without any מציאות to himself. This is what distinguishes a Rebbe, ראש בני ישראל, from the rest of us.

Not having any מציאות for himself, he is a ממוצע המחבר, a conduit for Hashem's השפעה to *Yidden*, and for that matter the world at large.

As such, the Rebbe not having a מציאות of his own, certainly not private, personal or physical desires etc., even after the Rebbe's physical passing his נשמה continues serving as a conduit for Hashem's השפעה, and he is still "active in this world"; and not having the physical limitations of the body, he is even more active.

The Rebbe's חפצים are holy because the Rebbe's neshama is holy i.e. being completely מקושר to Hashem. So is his גוף which is a pure vessel without any hindrance ח"ו to his נשמה, as the Zohar says about Tzadikim that נשמתא דילהון קדישא וגופא דילהון קדישא, and so is everything associated with the Rebbe.

Hence a dollar or Sefer of the Rebbe is holy; so much so that it is a protection and a blessing to those owning it.

Removing items associated with the Rebbe and selling them for their financial value is a declaration that ח"ו these Seforim etc. are חול. In the Rebbe's words it is "tearing away at pieces of the Rebbe's life" and a denial of the קדושה and נצחיות of a Rebbe. For that matter it is a denial of the very concept of "קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני" - the Purpose of Torah and Mitzvos and the very ability of permeating the physical world with kedusha as personified by tzadikim and particularly the Rebbe's. This therefore is a מלחמה against all the Rabbeim and ultimately all of Yiddishkeit.

That is what the victory of Hei Teves is all about.

Like in the case yud test kislev where the Alter Rebbe emphasized, and the rebbe explained the significance of the "world" recognizing, that the victory (miracle) was another major שלב in accomplishing dirah b'tachtonim.

Similarly, the נצחון of Hei Teves is at the core of what chassidus is - to bring about dirah betachtonim. Hence the significance that even the secular court realized that the Rebbe is not an individual who has a life of his own - in the famous statement of the Rebbetzen - "the Seforim belonged to the Chassidim because my father belonged to the Chassidim", meaning that his very being is his devotion to Hashem and the Jewish people.

This sensitivity is at the core of this case. Hence, paying for the Seforim is ח"ו a הסכמה, an admission of this fellow's *shaichus* to the Seforim and that the Seforim are not absolutely permeated with the Rebbe's קדושה. This, that there can be something in the world מתחוץ לתחום הקדושה, independent of Hashem's domain, is what ע"ז is all about.

Following that line, is the didan notzach of **these** Seforim, that they are indeed holy and were redeemed from the doubt that was casted as to **their** true status. And by extension it is a *Yom Tov* that emphasizes the **purpose** of all Seforim - to be studied and add in יראת שמים and אהבת השם.

גילוי תורת החסידות והפצת המעיינות of למעלה ולמטה which opened up a new era י"ט כסלו and גילוי אלקות ואחדות ה' - Hei Teves is a leap in the גילוי אלקות ואחדות ה' as it expresses the קדושה and נצחיות of the Rebbe and all that is associated with him. (ויש להאריך בהחידוש שבזה) (ובפרט וכו)

ה' טבת תשע"ז

In addition to being שמח in the Rebbe's simcha on the Rebbe's special day as befits every chassid; in addition to the brachos that comes through the simcha - based on the famous *maamer* of the alter Rebbe "מי שישמח בשמחתי אוציאנו מן המצר אל המרחב" as in the three נוסחאות of that statement; in addition to זכרים ונעשים and ויהימים האלה נזכרים ונעשים, hei teves being the day in which the אור broke through into this world -

The nitzachon of Hei Teves is a נצחון נצחי, offering **US** an insight into the מצב in which we find ourselves today - that the Rebbe's life is חיים נצחיים, that the Rebbe is active today like before, and more - every year and every day he is משפיע more כוחות and more ברכות etc.

It is up to us to stay connected and be a כלי to receive his ברכות and כוחות.

Hei Teves is the time to connect and reconnect.

Good Yom Tov

Please email all feedback to ris@chabadwi.org